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SUBJECT: GON Road Show to Argue Case to ECOWAS States

Ref: Abuja 01947

¶1. On October 26, President Tandja deployed a delegation headed by Prime Minister (PM) Ali Badjo Gamatie to various West African states. The Government of Niger (GON) stated Gamatie would lead a nine-member delegation with a primary responsibility to "explain the political situation of Niger to West African state leaders." This move by President Tandja comes in response to the October 21 ECOWAS decision to impose sanctions on Niger (reftel). Gamatie flew to Bamako on October 26, to hand-deliver a message on behalf of President Tandja to his Malian counterpart. Modibo Sidibe, Malian Prime Minister, met Gamatie at the airport.

¶2. (U) The delegation headed to West African capitals comprises several close aides of President Tandja, including former PM Seini Oumarou; Economic, Social and Cultural Council President Cheiffou Amadou; Minister of Communications and Government Spokesperson Kassoum Mamane Moctar; and Moctar's predecessor, Mohamed Ben Omar.

¶3. (U) PM Gamatie's delegation list included:

- Mamane Oumarou, Mediator of the Republic;
- Cheffou Amadou, President of the Economic, Social, and Cultural Council (CESOC);
- Hamid Algabid, President of the High Council of Territorial Collectivities;
- Seini Oumarou, former Prime Minister and MNSD President;
- Kassoum Mamane Moctar, Minister of Communication and Government Spokesperson;
- Sanoussi Jackou, former professor, minister, and parliamentarian;
- Mohamed Ben Omar, former Minister of Communication and Government Spokesperson;
- Seybou Almoustapha, Deputy Chief of Staff to the Prime Minister; and
- Mahamadou Aboubacar, Foreign Ministry Director of African Bilateral Cooperation.

¶3. (U) Comment: Over the past few days, the GON has shown willingness to engage with international bodies. Since the announcement of the ECOWAS decision to suspend Niger, key GON officials, such as Foreign Minister Mindaoudou, reacted in a conciliatory tone, expressing the GON's disposition to respond to

the ECOWAS mediator's anticipated call for discussion. This comes in stark contrast to statements made leading up to the legislative elections, where President Tandja and GON officials indicated Niger could do without the international community. The GON now seeks to convince its neighbors that the demise of its democracy is "misunderstood." One media source labeled the mission as "a campaign to explain." End comment.

ALLEN